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ABSTRACT

A teacher education course on reading in the content areas had two goals: (1) to embody, rather than talk about, the reading-writing connection; and (2) to effect through a workshop setting a community of learners among the participants. Students were required to select, adapt, and apply instructional strategies from a variety of textbooks and articles; receive peer and instructor feedback; revise; and submit their "best" strategies in the form of course portfolios. An analysis of student writing revealed seven key indicators as outcomes of this course innovation: metacognition; use of prior knowledge; writing to learn processes; reaction to peer responses; cognitive engagement; enthusiasm; and experience of intertextuality. A sample of one student's writing is used to address the issue of transfer of course learning to the student teaching setting. (Forty-six references are attached.) (Author/SR)

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ED324687

Title: Writing Portfolios for a Community of Learners in a Content Area Reading Course

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Summary:

The two goals of incorporating writing portfolios (Elbow and Belanoff, 1986) into a content area reading course were [1] to embody, rather than "talk about," the reading-writing connection (Tierney and Shanahan, 1990) and [2] to effect through a workshop setting (Atwell, 1987) a community of learners (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Tierney and O'Flahavan, 1989) among the participants. Students were required to select, adapt, and apply (Herber and Nelson, 1983; Alvermann and Swafford, 1989) instructional strategies from a variety of textbooks and articles; receive peer and instructor feedback; revise; and submit their "best" strategies in the form of course portfolios. An analysis of student writing revealed 7 key indicators as outcomes of this course innovation: metacognition; use of prior knowledge; writing to learn processes; reaction to peer responses; cognitive engagement; enthusiasm; and experience of intertextuality. The article concludes with a sample of one student's writing to address the issue of transfer of course learning to the student teaching setting.

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Teach as we say, not as we teach.

As instructors of a content area reading course, we wanted to avoid that all-to-easy trap which Harste (1990) calls the "transmission model of teacher education." We wanted preservice and inservice teachers in our content area reading course to say, in effect, "They modeled what they taught. . . we actually had a 'hands-on' experience of the content and process recommended in that course. . . we were involved . . . we were active learners and critical thinkers and not merely regurgitators out to get a good grade by returning the information that was given."

Our year long effort and research had two integrally related goals: [1] to design and deliver a course that would embody, rather than "talk about," the reading-writing connection; and [2] to employ a workshop instructional framework to create a community of learners among the participants. We felt that our students would better understand content area reading-writing connections if they experienced them as members of a learning community.

In this research report, for the sake of rationale, we first present related research and theoretical perspectives. We then describe how we set about building a literate environment and a community of learners in the course, including the use of multiple sources, attention to such factors as bonding among students and with their instructor and to how and why student writing portfolios

contributed to the sense of community in the classroom. In the third section, we discuss how writing portfolios can encourage metacognition and summarize the guidelines and suggestions we gave our students as they developed instructional strategies, portfolios, and their "I-Search" coversheets. We then provide an analysis of student writing revealing what we saw as the 7 key indicators relating to the outcomes of this course innovation, namely, their metacognition, use of prior knowledge, writing to learn processes, reaction to peer responses, cognitive engagement, enthusiasm, and use of intertextuality. We conclude the section on outcomes by presenting a letter one student wrote us and comment about what her remarks reveal and promise in terms of student application in the capstone experience of the student teaching semester.

RELATED RESEARCH AND RATIONALE

To bring about this challenging change, we have, since 1989, been trying to be "teachers as researchers," albeit at the college level. We have been in the process of continually revising our content area reading course so that we and our students can work cooperatively as a community of learners within a literate environment. Members of such communities "...facilitate their own and others' learning by sharing, offering support, suggesting possibilities, and evaluating ideas in a social context...."(Tierney and O'Flavahan, 1989).

In order to encourage such interaction, we based much of our instructional framework on the workshop-teaching guidelines offered

by Atwell (1987), in which the bulk of classroom time is divided into ---

a. mini-lecture or explanation;

b. workshop time in which students read/write/confer;

c. group share and wrap-up time.

During the workshop time, which averages about 40 to 50 minutes per class hour, students are encouraged to take risks and to explore ideas; to hypothesize, test, and then accept, modify, or confirm their hunches; and to "challenge and accept divergent perspectives" (Tierney and O'Flahavan, 1989). As workshop participants, students are active, interactive, and engaged; they are builders of knowledge and understanding, not passive receivers.

In our course, allotted workshop time is devoted to five main endeavors:

1. reading and selecting content area reading, writing, or studying strategies from journal articles and content area reading textbooks available in our College of Education library;
2. adapting these strategies using socio-psycholinguistic theory as a guide (Gilles et al., 1989, pp. 3-10);
3. applying and modifying the adapted instructional strategies in light of specific content area units or chapters/pages in recently published pupil textbooks;
4. revising the instructional strategies in response to self, peer, and instructor critiques;
5. selecting "best" instructional strategies for inclusion

in their course portfolio, and writing "I-Search" cover sheets for each favorite.

However, this process should be viewed as highly recursive and flexible rather than as strictly linear and sequential.

As can be seen, these five endeavors, taken together, represent a "marriage" of reading and writing processes in our content area reading course. In their review of 18 articles dealing with the state of research, theory, and practice in reading-writing relationships, Tierney and Shanahan (1990) noted that reading and writing carried out in tandem [in a variety of contexts and grade levels, including college] produced a number of consistent and highly desirable outcomes:

a. there is more manipulation and, hence, learning of content;
b. more ideas are elaborated;
c. learners have a better orientation to significant information;
d. learners better integrate textual information with prior knowledge and experiences;
e. quality of thinking, as opposed to quantity of ideas recalled, is improved.

THE LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

Among the key elements of our literate environment and community of learners were the course text, library collections,

activities for encouraging bonding and collaboration, and the writing portfolio.

The innovations discussed in this article were implemented in our reading in the content area course beginning in the Fall of 1989. The course was taught in two eight-week blocks of approximately 35 students each in both the Fall and Spring semesters. We used Gilles et al.(1989) Whole Language Strategies for Secondary Students as our required course textbook because it assisted our students in several ways. Although students who were secondary majors had a difficult time comprehending Chapter One, they easily understood the theoretical framework after reading the vignettes in Chapter Two. They appreciated the wealth of "social learning" instructional strategies contained in subsequent sections. We directed our students to use the headings in Gilles, et al. as a kind of "writing frame" (Santa, 1988) for their adapted strategies. Thus, each of their strategies had the following: a title, cited professional reference(s), cited pupil textbook and attached photocopies of applicable pages as well as a heading for --

a. Why?

b. Who?

c. How?

d. Then What?

This repeated format provided a structure that freed students to concentrate on adapting, writing, and revising 12 instructional strategies.

After the students adapted their first three to five strategies from the Gilles text and discovered for themselves the advantages and strengths of the theoretical framework, the format, and the processes we recommended, we sent them off to scour our Education library in search of promising strategies in such journals as The Reading Teacher and Journal of Reading as well as in a wide-range of earlier and current editions of content area reading professional texts [e.g., Estes and Vaughan, 1978; Herber, 1978; Lapp, Flood, and Farnum, 1989; Manzo and Manzo, 1990; Readance, Bean, and Baldwin, 1989; Richardson and Morgan, 1990; Robinson, 1983; Smith, C., 1978; Tierney, Readance and Dishner, 1990; Singer and Donlan, 1989; Vacca and Vacca, 1989].

Though a variety of strategies were presented through mini-lectures and collaborative projects, we told our students that we required no specific types of strategies [e.g., strategies aimed at vocabulary development, use of text structure to enhance comprehension]. Instead, we simply said that their task was to find and adapt strategies in the professional literature that they truly felt would help their future students cope with and learn from specific expository or narrative texts.

The process of searching for and selecting strategies encouraged our students to formulate criteria, hypothesize, adapt, test [through peer review], and adjust strategies, making themselves critical consumers who were actively engaged in the reconstruction and testing of strategies contained in the professional literature, not merely in a single, required course

textbook. As instructors, we simply could not "tell" them that they should use related readings and texts in their teaching while we did not carry out our own advice in our own teaching.

However, our students did not copy or even "lightly" paraphrase the strategies they selected in journal articles and professional texts. Instead, their adaptations included, but were not limited to, changes to fit specific demands of the content textbook, to accommodate different abilities of students, and to include stronger elements of pupil collaboration and uses of reading-writing connections.

All of this, along with our own modeling, served as a foundation for socializing students into the profession as teacher-researchers (Olson, 1990; Stenhouse, 1988; Rudduck, 1988) rather than as passive and uncritical consumers of research. Furthermore, functioning within a community of learners prepares students to collaborate as inquiring professionals within a community of teachers who are "committed to learning about and understanding the problems and effects of their own strategic action, and the improvement of this strategic action in practice" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 163). However, students did not come to us as a ready-made collaborative and supportive community; such a community had to be built.

BUIDING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Bonding. Williams (1989) points out the importance of bonding to facilitate the cooperative efforts envisioned by Atwell (1987),

Fulwiler (1987), and Mayher, Lester, and Pradl (1983). Bonding is particularly important in the case of college classes such as ours in which many of the students come from different disciplines and may be meeting each other for the first time. Bonding began by having students interview and introduce partners and continued through collaborative analysis of theoretical chapters in the required, common text and in collaborative adaptation of an initial strategy as a group of 3 to 5. Students also shared by offering 60-second oral reviews of reading or writing in the content area textbooks within small groups and, finally, by selecting one of six topics they wanted to research as a member of a collaborative research group. The groups (Writing to Learn, The Reading Process, Literacy Research Trends of the Eighties, Text Structure and Analysis, Language Diversity) were given folders with 5 to 10 articles and chapters. They decided which ones were to be read (at least one per student), who would read what, and, later, what ideas from each would be of interest to the class as a whole. This process culminated in group papers, presentations, and activities that were creative, informative, and involved class members. We have found that these experiences helped build a community of learners.

However, we noticed that some students, though they increasingly valued the support and suggestions of their peers, were still hesitant about sharing drafts of their adapted strategies. Therefore, we decided to require a system of writing

portfolios which connected collaboration more directly with evaluation.

Writing Portfolios in Support of Community. It was important to us as instructors to have a close match between our theoretical framework, instructional strategies, and the methods of evaluation. We were especially concerned that the evaluation system would encourage and facilitate, rather than frustrate or interfere with, development of the community of learners.

The portfolio system for evaluation developed by Elbow and Belanoff (1986) offered a means of evaluation that was compatible with our goals. Their method was designed to foster collaboration and to foster reflection on process within a college writing program. As used by Elbow and Belanoff, students were required to choose a few of their best works from among all of their writing of the term and to submit these for evaluation along with a cover sheet acknowledging any collaboration and explaining in narrative form the various processes they had gone through.

We adapted Elbow and Belanoff's cover-sheet to our purposes by requiring students to solicit two peer reviews of their adapted strategies and to respond to those reviews by enumerating and justifying their decisions to make changes or not. In the context of our course, we hoped the coversheet would facilitate "a supporting, literate, thinking community" (Tierney and O'Flahavan, 1989).

METACOGNITION THROUGH WRITING PORTFOLIOS

Since our students searched multiple sources for appropriate

strategies to adapt or for relevant literature to guide adaptation of a chosen strategy, we asked that their portfolio strategy cover sheets also include a narrative account of their search and the choices they made along the way, an adaptation of Macrorie's (1988) "I-Search" paper. We hoped that this cover-sheet would serve to foster reflection and metacognition in our course and would allow students the opportunity to become more critically and consciously aware of their own reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking. It could well give them the conscious control to adjust or extend their thinking and communication to meet a variety of needs, while still legitimizing the collaboration so important to writing and thinking. As it turned out, the cover sheet's metacognitive function served our students in much the same way that Garner's (1984) look-back strategy enabled readers to be more aware of their purposes, to detect failures in understanding, and to take appropriate action to correct those failures. Furthermore, we later found that the cover sheet provided a context which facilitated the instructor's ability to judge the effectiveness of the adaptation of the strategy or to make suggestions.

Students were required to turn in their first individually adapted strategy for confirmation that they were on the right track. After that, they were encouraged, indeed, required to ask for peer or teacher assistance and feedback during the rest of the semester. Of the 12 strategies developed for the term, students were required to submit one of their first three to five strategies at midterm in a manila folder [portfolio] and two of their last

seven to nine strategies at the end of the term in a second manila folder [portfolio]. The two portfolios, along with their course notebook containing all of their strategies, class notes, group notes, and handouts were used to determine their grades.

Portfolio Guidelines. At the beginning of the term, we handed out the following guidelines related to the portfolios to be submitted at mid term and again at the end of the term.

1. Select a strategy from the required text (Gilles, 1989), from articles in professional journals [e.g. Journal of Reading or The Reading Teacher], or from one of the professional texts [e.g. Vacca and Vacca, 1989; Manzo and Manzo, 1990] in the library stacks or "on reserve."
2. Adapt, tailor, and apply the strategy either to a particular topic, unit or chapter within a recently published pupil content area textbook or to appropriate supplementary materials [e.g., trade books, magazines].
3. Reflect and make notes on your thinking and decision-making processes.
4. Have a course partner being certified in your subject matter area critically read and constructively critique [in writing] your adapted strategy.
5. Have a course partner not in your subject matter area do likewise [in writing].
6. Revise your strategy in light of these peer responses...if you feel they are truly helpful.
7. Compose a one or two page cover-sheet that includes---

* a narrative account of your reading, thinking, decision-making, and writing processes;
* your decision-making criteria;
* acknowledgement of collaborations [including your justifications for using or not using suggestions offered by your colleagues].

8. Submit to your instructor in a manila folder [portfolio]
   * your cover-sheet
   * final draft of your strategy
   * written comments from your partners
   * photocopies of the pertinent pages from the pupil textbook or supplementary material that your strategy applies to.

In reference to guideline two, Alvermann and Swafford (1989) observe that "there is evidence that teachers who develop expertise in the strategies they learn from methods texts and staff development workshops spend considerable time adapting those strategies to suit students' needs" [italics added] (p. 388). Studies by Conley (1986) and Herber and Nelson (1983) tend to support such claims, with work by Santa (1988) and Monahan (1987) emphasizing the role of action research in this process. Since our students did not have access to pupils during this course, we emphasized that peer review could serve a similar role but that further revision would be necessary once the adaptations were tried in the field.

MAJOR OUTCOMES

Excerpts from student portfolios revealed glimpses of how students from a variety of academic disciplines make reading/writing strategies for the content areas their own. The insights gained from perusing student cover-sheets and peer responses have proven invaluable in assessing students and the course, but perhaps more importantly, reading the portfolios has made us more aware of how students adapt strategies for their own purposes. In addition, it has revealed to a number of our students that their experience and knowledge within their discipline is relevant to the task of assisting their future students to become more engaged in reading, writing, and thinking about course content.

On the basis of Tierney et al.'s (1990) review of the research literature pertaining to reading-writing relationships, we identified seven categories of outcomes [metacognition, prior knowledge, writing to learn, peer responses, cognitive engagement, enthusiasm, and intertextuality] as a result of analyzing approximately 280 portfolios. Next, we independently selected six to ten of the best examples for each category, and, finally, we chose one or two of the clearest of these examples from each category to be included here. Students' names are fictitious, while the content areas are accurate.

Metacognition

According to Vacca and Vacca (1989), it is not enough for students to know something; they must also be aware of how they

know if they are to become independent learners. In reading, this metacognition develops from "extended experiences with text, process explanations, and modeling" (p. 23). They cite Armbruster, Echols, and Brown's (1982) research on study strategies, stating that students "must be aware of text, task, and self, and how they interact to effect learning" (p. 221).

Excerpts from portfolios submitted in our course revealed that metacognitive awareness served a variety of purposes. For instance, many students wrote of the processes of thought that led to particular adaptations of strategy lessons.

> As I look back at the processes I went through in developing this strategy, it quickly becomes apparent that our book of strategies should only be used as a guide. I enjoyed expanding on the idea of having students write "Immigrant Diaries" [Gilles, 1989, p. 83]...I like the (student) book... both the text and the photographs portray living conditions for immigrants in America....I followed the strategy's main ideas, yet really made it my own creation....On my third draft I decided to expand step three of the "How" by adding a discussion of different nationalities of immigrants and why many decided to immigrate. I felt that by adding this a better background would be provided for the diary writing .
>
> ---Jane A., Social Studies

Other students showed evidence of reflecting on previous thought processes in their efforts to choose appropriate strategies and to improve them.

> Learning chemistry can be very difficult for students who are not organized or do not know how to read a chemistry text. In order to write a strategy which would help students grasp the knowledge of chemistry, I considered what processes I use to learn chemistry. The ERRQ+R Method by S. R. Crenshaw [Gilles, 1989, p. 46] is very similar....
>
> ---Michelle B., Chemistry

> In my geometry class I find myself asking mental questions about whether a certain shape is classified under a particular heading. Thus, this strategy hit home to me. In developing the graphic organizer strategy [Monahan and Hinson, 1987], I tried to include group activities, reading, and writing....
>
> ---Beth C., Math/Physics

Beth C. had developed her strategy dealing with analyses of polygons for a 5 page section in Jurgensen and Brown's (1990) Geometry textbook.

Prior Knowledge

In addition to this awareness of previous thought processes, the portfolios revealed the great extent to which students' prior knowledge assisted in understanding and adapting strategies. Readance, Bean, and Baldwin (1989) point out that one of the most significant and pertinent findings to emerge from research in the fields of learning and comprehension is the "marked degree" to which a student's background knowledge of a topic enhances future comprehension. The Reading Report Card (1985), published by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, noted, "To foster higher level literacy skills is to place a new and special interest emphasis on thoughtful, critical elaboration of ideas and understandings drawn from the materials students read and from what they already know."

> This strategy (Text Lookback) [Garner et al, 1984] reminds me of Polya's book, How to Solve It, which is a monumental work on problem solving. His last step is to look back. To him, the look-back step is not only to see what you have done, but to see how you could do it differently and to ask the question "What if?". All this could be incorporated into [Garner's] strategy....
>
> ---Cindy D., Math

> One of the problems discussed in the [Spanish methods] class I took was that students tend to read the vocabulary and only think of the literal meaning of the words. As a result students do not completely understand the literature. Students need to develop the skill of going beyond the literal meaning of a word. I thought that strategy 9.6, "Inference-Extension of Meaning" [Gilles, 1989, p. 141] dealt with this problem well.
>
> ---Laura E., Spanish

Students' own experiences in high school also become powerful tools.

> When I first looked at the K-W-L article [Ogle, 1986] I had no idea what it was about....After reading the article, I knew that I could make a strategy from this article. For me in high school, my history classes were boring and I found myself reading a page over and over again because the material was so bland and I had nothing to focus on. With the K-W-L strategy the student has an idea of what they are looking for. It especially helps because it's what they want to learn.
>
> ---Shirley F., History

Shirley had applied her adaptation of K-W-L to a 7 page section dealing with "The Rise of Russia" in the pupil textbook by Gutierrez (1977) The World and Its People.

Writing to Learn

According to Emig (1977) and Berthoff (1978), writing is a process of discovery and of coming to new understandings. Expressive writing, more exploratory and speculative in nature than transactional writing (Britton, 1975), often leads us in directions we had not planned on taking. Fulwiler explains that expessive writing (e.g., journal writing and rough drafts) helps the student toward both improved learning (idea formation, decision-making,

self-discovery, and understanding) and improved transactional writing (clarity, organization, and correctness).

> As I was writing...I realized there could be another option. This is when I thought a health magazine could be published. I was really excited about this idea....
>
> ---Sandra G., Elementary Reading

> Personal criticism of my rough draft: I decided that the writing assignment was too vague---I wasn't sure of what I wanted. Therefore, in step 4 of the second draft, I listed specific points to be covered in the paper and put the emphasis on clarity of expression.
>
> ---Mark H., History

Other students demonstrated their new-found interest in writing to learn by using it within their strategies and by redesigning strategies in such a way as to encourage their students to reflect on the processes and benefits of writing within a community of learners.

> I would try to make sure students observe and discuss one another's composing strategies.
>
> ---Karen I., Elementary Reading

Peer Responses

Peer collaboration as evidenced through peer responses was a key element of our content area reading-writing portfolio approach. As Tierney and O'Flahavan (1989) explain, the goal of a class that is structured as a literate environment for a community of learners is ---

> ...for each student to be an initiator, a decision maker. To achieve this, students might function as

> collaborators to fellow peers, facilitators for peers, and monitors and apprentices of their own learning. They should be given the opportunity to self-initiate, self-direct, and self-assess their own learning. This does not entail students' working in total isolation or without any teacher or peer support. Students learn from others. For example, students facilitate their own and others' learning by sharing, offering support, suggesting possibilities, and evaluating ideas in a social context involving communities of learners (p. 301).
> [italics ours]

There was ample evidence of this sort of collaboration in the portfolios of our students.

> I then put my strategy to the test by having Ellen and Bob read and critique it....
>
> ---Anna J., Elementary/Reading

> From collaborating I gained reinforcement about my idea and found that others saw it as legitimate. From Heidi's comments I realized I could incorporate more reading. Through this I thought of having students make a simpler version into a picture book for young children. They could share these in the preschool unit or put them into their child-care kits for childsitting
>
> ---Martha K., Home Economics

Another student, a physics major, shared in class his excitement at the discovery that an English teacher and an art teacher could contribute valuable feedback that allowed him to improve his strategy. Many students spoke of the value of peer responses and discussed ways in which they might establish similar networks of support and critique once they become teachers.

Furthermore, students often discovered new strategies or useful adaptations when reviewing the strategies of others.

> Martha, I could use this for my class; it would be a good way for me to show how direct translation from English to Spanish doesn't always work and give the class a chance to use idiomatic expressions.
>
> ---Donna L., Spanish responding to Martha K., Home Economics

Cognitive Engagement

In research reported in the Reading Research Quarterly, Tierney, Soter, O'Flahavan, and McGinley (1989) carried out a detailed analysis of the writing revisions and other responses of 120 college students. They found that higher levels of cognitive or thoughtful engagement among their subjects were due to the writing they performed and that the "writing" subjects [a] made more retrospective comments about their thinking process, [b] evidenced more evaluative thinking, or [c] showed a greater inclination to revise their positions. The process of looking back, evaluating, and revising is evident in Mark's reflection on the development of his strategy, entitled "Alien Vote", which was a post-reading strategy requiring students to make connections between "Black Americans Demand Equal Rights and Opportunities" in Todd and Curtis' (1986) Triumph of the American Nation and an episode from the popular television series Alien Nation.

> John suggested 1) having students look for reality bases in other T.V. shows to practice and further develop this skill and 2) giving the student some ideas of what to look for in watching the episodes. I agree with John on the first point and added an appropriate follow-up activity to the final draft. On the second point, however, I did not want to give the students too many hints since I wanted them to draw appropriate conclusions and inferences. I felt the clues presented in step 3 were adequate for giving

> the students some sort of framework to organize the episode's ideas in.
>
> ---Mark H., History

Enthusiasm

Salvatori (1985) found that lower division college students enrolled in a Basic Reading and Writing course overcame their negative attitudes and became not only more active and evaluative in their questioning, but also more enthusiastic in general after they engaged in a series of reading, writing, and discussion activities on carefully selected topics closely related to their personal experiences and interests. In our course we observed large measures of enthusiasm also.

> I had the greatest time creating this strategy! I wanted to do something like a newspaper but then this idea came to me, and I laughed out loud. I am very glad that my peers liked this one too.
>
> ---Sharon M., Social Studies

Sharon liked "The Historical Newspaper Strategy" offered in Gilles et al. (1989, 104), but when she tried to adapt it to her chosen pupil text, Cutright and Durand's (1978) American Neighbors, she was uncomfortable with the fit. She solved her problem by converting the "newspaper" strategy to a "travel brochure" strategy and using some of the same processes discussed in the original.

Part of the fire underneath students' enthusiasm sprang from what was apparently a strong sense of ownership. They often referred to their adapted strategies as "my strategy" or "my creation" and commented on how anxious they were to see how it

would work in a classroom.

Intertextuality

According to Cairney (1990), intertextuality refers to processes of interpreting one text by means of a previously composed text or texts. But, as Cairney and Langbien (1989) explain, it takes place in a necessarily social context where learning, thought, and knowledge are the result of collaborations. Furthermore, Cairney (1990), discussing Kristeva (1980), explains that intertextuality refers to a "form of dialog with total texts [written, heard, or read] of the reader's experiences. This dialogue can occur through writing, reading, speaking, watching, and listening (p. 480)."

Our students' transactions involving intertextuality stemmed from the fact that they had to [1] select reading and writing across the curriculum instructional strategies from a variety of texts and articles, [2] adapt them in ways they themselves and their partners felt would be helpful, and [3] then apply them to and in light of actual pages of pupil textbooks or supplementary materials. We saw our students engaged in "active meaning-making and the potency of an environment that facilitates transactions and tensions between texts" (Tierney and Shanahan, 1990). Our students noted in class discussions that this was not easy----"no low-level intellectual task"----but that they could "get it done better and more easily" because they had carried out the task in collaboration with their classmates.

> From there, I had to decide what theoretical base to use for the strategy. In Bechtel (1985), I read about 1) the importance of giving students feedback on rough drafts whenever possible and 2) how peer evaluations can be an extremely effective method for improving the writing skills of both the evaluator and the writer. Also from the flip folder [Monahan and Hinson, 1988] I read about inferences, and decided to try and give students a chance to draw inferences... Using these ideas as the primary base for my strategy, I pulled bits and pieces from a variety of sources (including those listed on my strategy) and my imagination to develop a rough draft....
>
> ---Mark H., History

Transfer to the Classroom

As committed instructors, we cringe when we overhear undergraduates in the hallway saying that they have heard from others that they should forget what they have learned in their college courses when they enter the "real world" of student teaching. We take it with a grain of salt, but, nonetheless, sit down and reflect once again on the content and methods of our courses, while we long to hear from former students that what they have learned in our course has helped them in the classroom. A letter from one of our students, written during her student teaching experience the semester following her completion of our course, points out the benefits of our approach and her appreciation for the importance of the portfolio cover-sheet in nurturing and focusing students' growth in a community of learners.

> Dear _____,
>
> I have already had a chance to try one of our strategies. To set the scene: My class was working on writing essays about Martin Luther King. My cooperating teacher follows the standard writing process cycle. Peer response groups are part

of this cycle, but I noticed [the teacher] had only scheduled about 15 minutes. After asking her about it, I found that she felt her classes were not very successful with response groups and usually wasted time. Thus, she didn't want to give them much time...I felt this was a very important part of the writing process, and I thought this would be the perfect opportunity for me to try strategy 4.12 "Ask Something" [Gilles, 1989, p. 47]. This strategy, I felt, would actively involve all group members, and they would all be responsible for turning in response cards. I did adjust the strategy a bit to fit the needs of my students. I had students work in groups of four, and instead of a piece of paper, I had them use 3x5 cards. Also, instead of having students read each paper silently, the author read the paper aloud. Then, each group member wrote one question and/or statement on their 3x5 card. Each group member had a chance to talk about their card with the author. After all members had a turn, the author collected the cards for future reference during revision...Questions were to be about clarity, while statements were to take the form, "I hear you saying..." or "I think the main point is...".

....Having the students write down their responses had three purposes: One, to give the responder a concrete method of responding. Two, to give the author a concrete form of advice, something to refer back to. Third, to give me, the teacher, a way to check that all students responded.

One last thing that I added was a cover-sheet (an idea from our course portfolios). Each author had to write one, using their 3x5 cards...In this cover-sheet, they reflected upon which responses they used in their revisions and why, and which ones they chose not to use and why.

This strategy proved to be very successful....

Sincerely,
Susan N.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although we achieved our two goals vis-a-vis developing reading-writing connections and a community of learners, many additional issues and questions surfaced during the year which deserve further attention.

1. What percentage of student portfolios revealed few, if any, of the categorical outcomes? Why and what can be done to improve

the situation?

2. We need to study in depth the successes, failures, and problems students have as they attempt to interface content area reading and writing strategies with information contained in pupil texts. How do students deal with inconsiderate or even erroneous text?

3. What other categorical outcomes might be found in student strategies and reflections? Would the use of inter-rater reliability procedures strengthen our "teachers-as-researchers" findings (outcomes)?

4. Are our students more likely to collaborate with other teachers during student teaching or in-service teaching?

5. Once in the field, do our students use reading-writing strategies more often?

6. Do students continue to consult a variety of sources in search of strategies for their classes? What sources do they consult?

Literacy processes and course content can best be learned in a dynamic classroom community that is rich in social relationships, in partnerships, and in collaborations involving talking, listening, reading, thinking and writing. We decided to turn our course into an embodiment of these dimensions. Looking back at the risks we took by departing from our traditional lecture-discussion format and by leaving more room for students to come to understand and use the course concepts and the wide variety of course materials on their own terms, we can see clearly that it was the

use of a reading-writing workshop approach, supported by portfolios, that changed our course from being "about" content area reading to being an actual experience of collaboration in reading and writing to learn more about the field of study known as content area reading and writing.

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